IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Withdrawn) A process for modulating virulence of a *Streptococcus* comprising:

modifying a genomic fragment of the *Streptococcus*;

wherein at least part of the genomic fragment is capable of hydridizing to a nucleotide sequence selected from the group of nucleotide sequences consisting of any one of SEQ ID NOS: 8-45 or fragments thereof; and

generating a clone having the modified genomic fragment.

2. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 2, wherein the genomic fragment comprises a functional part of a gene, the expression of which can be environmentally regulated by iron-restricted conditions in *Streptococcus suis*.

3. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 1, wherein the genomic fragment comprises a functional part of a wild-type *Streptococcus suis* gene expressed in a pig infected with wild-type *Streptococcus suis*.

4. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 3, wherein the wild-type *Streptococcus suis* gene encodes a fibronectin/fibrinogen-binding protein.

5. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 1, wherein the *Streptococcus* is *Streptococcus suis*.

6. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 1, wherein modifying the genomic fragment comprises functionally deleting the at least part of the genomic fragment capable of hydridizing to the nucleotide sequence.

7. (Withdrawn) A clone of a *Streptococcus*, obtained by the process according to claim 1.

8. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 1, wherein the genomic fragment encodes a fibronectin/fibrinogen-binding protein.

9. (Withdrawn) A process for assaying virulence of a *Streptococcus* comprising:

assaying an ability of the *Streptococcus* to infect a subject;

wherein the *Streptococcus* comprises a genomic fragment associated with a virulence factor to infect a subject; and

wherein at least part of the genomic fragment is capable of hydridizing to a nucleotide sequence selected from the group of nucleotide sequences consisting of any one of SEQ ID NOS: 8-45 or fragments thereof.

10. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 9, wherein the genomic fragment encodes a fibronectin/fibrinogen-binding protein.

11. (Currently amended) An isolated or recombinant nucleic acid molecule of a *Streptococcus* origin comprising:

a nucleotide sequence capable of hybridizing to the full length of a nucleotide sequence selected from the group of nucleotide sequences consisting of ~~any one of~~ SEQ ID NOS: 15, 16, 17, 24, 31, 33, 34, 37, 41 and 43;~~8-45 or fragments thereof~~

wherein the hybridizing occurs at 65°C in a buffer having 0.5 M sodium phosphate, 1 mM EDTA, and 7% sodium dodecyl sulphate at a pH of 7.2.

12. (Original) A vector comprising the isolated or recombinant nucleic acid molecule of claim 11.

13. (Previously presented) A host cell comprising the isolated or recombinant nucleic acid molecule of claim 11.

14. (Original) The host cell of claim 13, wherein the host cell is of a *Streptococcus* origin.

15. (Currently amended) A ~~vaccine~~ composition comprising the isolated or recombinant nucleic acid molecule of claim 11.

16. (Withdrawn) A protein or fragment thereof, encoded by the isolated or recombinant nucleic acid molecule of claim 11.

17. (Withdrawn) An antibody directed against the protein or fragment thereof of claim 16.

18. (Withdrawn) An antigen comprising the protein or fragment thereof of claim 16.

19. (Withdrawn) A diagnostic test comprising the antibody of claim 17.

20. (Withdrawn) A vaccine or diagnostic test comprising the antigen of claim 18.